

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-12 MCT-01 COME-00 HA-05 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01
OPR-02 A-01 AID-05 PC-01 SY-05 /108 W
-----064365 202031Z /50

P R 201947Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7395
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS PINT SHUM ES
SUBJ: MARCH 17 CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOES AND BPR FOLLOW-UP

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1323

1. MARCH 17 CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOES SECURITY FORCES AND
LEFTIST POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR) AND ITS TWO MAJOR
COMPONENTS, CATHOLIC FEDERATION OF SALVADORAN CAMPESINOS (FECCAS) AND
RURAL WORKERS UNION (UTC), MORE SERIOUS THAN INITIAL REPORTS
INDICATED.

2. MEDIA MARCH 18 CARRIED OFFICIAL GOES VERSION OF INCIDENT
AS RELEASED BY COL. LOPEZ, DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL POLICE,
TOGETHER WITH NUMEROUS GRAPHIC PHOTOS OF KILLED AND WOUNDED.

3. LOPEZ' STATEMENT CONTENDS THAT NEAR NOON ON MARCH 17
MANIFESTATION OF BETWEEN 400 TO 700 PEOPLE (OTHER
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SOURCES STILL MAINTAIN FIGURE CLOSER TO 300) WAS
ORGANIZED BY "THE ILLEGAL GROUPS" FECCAS AND UTC
FOR THE PURPOSE OF MARCHING ON AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT
BANK IN DOWNTOWN SAN SALVADOR. LOPEZ STATED GROUP
FORMED IN FRONT OF RED CROSS WITHOUT PERMIT REQUIRED BY
LAW OF DEFENSE AND GUARANTEE OF PUBLIC ORDER FOR SUCH
ACTIVITIES. LOPEZ SAID THAT UNIT OF NATIONAL POLICE,

UNDER COMMAND OF MAJOR RICARDO CANIZALEZ, WAS DISPATCHED TO AREA. MAJOR CANIZALEZ LEFT HIS CAR, AND WITH "COMPLETE COURTESY AND PRUDENCE" ATTEMPTED TO PERSUADE DEMONSTRATORS TO DEPART PEACEFULLY. LOPEZ STATED THAT SOME DEMONSTRATORS RESPONDED WITH INSULTS AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER SHOOTING BROKE OUT, SERIOUSLY WOUNDING CANIZALEZ (HE WAS FLOWN TO HOUSTON MARCH 19 FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT). LOPEZ ADDED THAT DURING EXCHANGE OF GUNFIRE THERE WERE SEVERAL VICTIMS OF 22-38 AND 45 CALIBER BULLETS (HE DID NOT GIVE SPECIFIC FIGURE OF DEAD AND WOUNDED, NOR MENTION DEATH OF 11-YEAR OLD BOY). HE STATED THAT DEMONSTRATORS ABANDONED INCENDIARY BOMBS (MOLOTOV COCKTAILS) AND SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA WHEN THEY FLED. A GROUP OF THE DEMONSTRATORS COMMANDEERED A PASSING BUS AND HEADED NORTH.

4. ACCORDING TO LOPEZ, POLICE SET UP ROAD BLOCKS AND STOPPED BUS IN QUESTION NEAR SMALL TOWN OF APOPA (APPROXIMATELY 10 MILES NORTH OF SAN SALVADOR). ANOTHER SHOOTOUT TOOK PLACE AND POLICE INSPECTOR ALBERTO BARAHONA AND FIVE OCCUPANTS OF THE BUS WERE KILLED. LOPEZ STATED THAT THIS DISGRACEFUL INCIDENT WAS INSTIGATED BY COMMUNIST INTELLECTUALS (USING FECCAS, UTC AND BPR) WHO WISHED TO PROVOKE CONFRONTATION WITH SECURITY FORCES. HE CONCLUDED WITH TRIBUTE TO INSPECTOR BARAHONA AND WARNED THAT SECURITY FORCES WOULD NOT PERMIT ANY DISTURBANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER NOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTS PROHIBITED BY LAW.

5. COMMENT. MEDIA REPORTS STATE EIGHT TO TEN KILLED (INCLUDING POLICE INSPECTOR) AND 20-25 WOUNDED. THIS FIGURE MAY STILL BE LOWER THAN ACTUAL COUNT. EVEN ACCEPTING OFFICIAL FIGURES, THIS IS MOST SERIOUS AND COSTLY CONFRONTATION DURING NINE-MONTH ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT ROMERO. SEVERAL SOURCES STATE THAT OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF DEMONSTRATION WAS PROTEST IN FRONT OF AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR BETTER SALARIES, LOAN CREDITS AND OTHER BENEFITS FOR CAMPESINOS. WHOEVER MAY HAVE PROVOKED INCIDENT, EVEN OFFICIAL VERSION WOULD INDICATE OVER-REACTION ON PART OF NATIONAL POLICE. TIMING OF INCIDENT, WHETHER BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN (SEVERAL HIGH GOES OFFICIALS ARE CONVINCED IT WAS BY DESIGN), ALSO MANAGED TO LIMIT PUBLICITY AND POSSIBLY REDUCE EFFECTIVENESS OF MAJOR GOES EFFORT FAVORABLY TO IMPRESS VISITING GOVERNOR FINCH OF MISSISSIPPI AND HIS PARTY OF 30 POTENTIAL INVESTORS AND TRADING PARTNERS WITH EL SALVADOR. DEVINE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANS01336
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780347/aaaabnl.n.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f641f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SAN SALVADOR 1323
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3267707
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MARCH 17 CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GOES AND BPR FOLLOW-UP
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, PORS, ES
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f641f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014